DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 744 SO 016 906

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TITLE "This Work Had A' End." The Transition from Live-In to Day Work. Southern Women: The Intersection of Race, Class and Gender. Working Paper 2.
INSTITUTION Duke-UNC Women's Studies Research Center, Chapel Hill.; Memphis State Univ., TN. Center for Research on Women.; Spelman Coll., Atlanta, Ga.
PUB DATE Jul 85
NOTE 58p.
AVAILABLE FROM Center for Research on Women, Memphis State University, Memphis, TN 38152 ($5.00).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Black Achievement; *Black Employment; Black Population Trends; Employed Women; Employment Patterns; *Females; *Household Workers; Housekeepers; Migration Patterns; Oral History; Population Trends; Primary Sources; Relocation; Rural to Urban Migration; *Rural Urban Differences; Work Environment; Working Hours
IDENTIFIERS *District of Columbia; *United States (South)

ABSTRACT

Experiences of black women, who migrated from the rural south to the District of Columbia between 1900 and 1926, are examined in order to illustrate the nature of household work during this period. While previous research on black private household workers usually attributed changes in household labor to architectural and technological trends, this data indicated that the transition from live-in servant to day worker occurred as a result of the women's desire for less restrictive employment. Oral histories of 23 black women, who made this transition, challenge the belief that household workers lacked the initiative and ability to control employment conditions. Southern relatives' roles, the Washington community, churches, and pre-migration experiences are examined, along with the consequences of the transition in relation to the women's self-esteem. Results indicate that the family, with its inherent roles and values, remained crucial to these women despite differences between their rural upbringing and urban employment. (Author/JHP)

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July, 1985

Working Paper 2

# "This Work Had A' End":
# The Transition From
# Live-In to Day Work

by

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Southern Women:

The Intersection of Race, Class and Gender

This is one of a series of working papers collaboratively sponsored by the Center for Research on Women at Memphis State University, the Women's Studies Research Center at Duke-University of North Carolina and the Women's Research and Resource Center at Spelman College.

Our Centers have joined together in an effort to promote scholarship on women in this region. We believe that research is especially needed to explore the ways class, race, and gender shape the roles and tasks for southern women. This series is intended to foster communications between scholars of southern women and disseminate their latest research to educators, students and the women they study.

If you would like additional copies of this working paper or have any questions about the series, contact:

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the lives of African-American women who migrated from the rural South to Washington D.C. during the period between 1900 and 1926 to examine important points in the "servicework" experiences of women in the late 19th and early 20th century. Unlike previous scholarship on Black private household workers which usually attributes changes in household labor to trends in architecture and technology, this research asserts that the transition from live-in servant to day worker occurred as a matter of choice, prompted by the women's desire for less restrictive employment. Oral histories with 23 African-American women who made the transition from live-in to day workers are used to challenge the prevailing sentiment that private household workers lacked the initiative and the ability to control the conditions of their employment. The research indicates that recent migrants travelled North to aid other family members working as live-in servants. They found live-in work in Washington, D.C. more restrictive than situations in the South and proceeded to work for years to save the funds to alter their conditions of work. The role of Southern rural kin, the Washington community, the church, and the women's pre-migration experiences are examined to elaborate on the structure of their lives. The details of the transition and its consequences for the women's self-esteem and church participation are also explored by the author. The paper concludes that the family, with its inherent roles and values, remained crucial to these women despite the differences between their rural upbringing and their urban employment.

> The living-in jobs just kept you running; never stopped. Day or night you'd be getting something for somebody. You'd serve them.
>
> It was never a minute's peace.... But when I went out days on my jobs, I'd get my work done and be gone. I guess that's it. This work had a end.

These words of Dolethia Otis, an eighty-three year old African American woman, recall her feelings about a major change in circumstances which took place in her life more than half a century earlier. She had left her employment as a live-in servant in Washington, D. C. to become an independent "dayworker."[1] From 1982 to 1984, the data for this study were collected through interviews with twenty-three African-American women between the ages of 72 and 99. All of the interviewees were born in rural and southern areas of the United States between the years 1882 and 1911: nine were born in Virginia; five in North Carolina; three in South Carolina; three in Alabama; one in Mississippi; one in Kentucky; and, one in Georgia. All of the women migrated to Washington, D. C. prior to 1921 and each made the transition from "live-in servant" to self employed household worker[2] before 1926.[3]

The majority of African-American women who migrated to the District of Columbia to perform live-in servant work had no basis for believing that there was a means of escape from the long accepted limitations imposed upon them because of their race, sex and class.[4] But they did escape

This article received invaluable assistance from William Chafe, Bonnie Thornton Dill, Carol Gethers, Karen Fields, Jacquelyn Hall, Barbara Heino, Elizabeth Higginbotham, Carol Johnson, Jim McClellan, Sandi Morgan, Debra Newman and Carol Stack.

and this study will examine the implications, for the women theselves, of the eventual transition from servant to household worker. It will also demonstrate that, as their roles changed, they experienced a hitherto unknown freedom to exercise control over their own lives. The study will also reflect how their perceptions about themselves (in relationship to others) underwent a significant change.

For the first time they felt on an almost equal footing with persons employed in the schools, in businesses and in the federal government. The most resented and visible stigmas of their former lifestyle faded. Leisure time and social relations could be enjoyed. It is important to recognize, however, that these changes occurred within the narrow and restrictive bounds of their cultural environment.[5]

Despised Race, Despised Calling

"Household servant work," a leading soholar stated in 1899, "drew a despised race to a despised calling."[6] A variety of historical circumstances were responsible for the employment revolution household service work underwent in areas outside of the south during the 1900 to 1920 period. This revolution has received very little scholarly attention because service work is outside the market and it has historically been poor women's work.[7] Most importantly, in the 20th century it is employment that goes: from a White "golden age" to an African-American "problem era"; from a White "servant girl" to the African-American "cleaning woman."[8]

In literature this employment transformation was confirmed in the

reminiscences and diaries of the period. Southern employers grieved at the loss of their "old time darkey" who had flown north. Northern mistresses mourned the loss of their cheerful, loyal and obedient immigrant girls; many of these women lamented that the only replacements for the immigrant girls "were new issue negroes who had grown up utterly untrained as cooks, housemaids and nurses . . . ."[9]

It was the expanded employment opportunities that lured a stream of migrants to the urban north.[10] Migrants moved into segregated northern communities that were coalesced around churches, schools, philanthropic institutions, and businesses. However there was absolutely no possibility of the migrant working in the businesses owned by these African-Americans or teaching in the schools of the communities where they settled because of the anti-migrant biases of the established African-American communities and the migrant's limited educations. The migrants, disproportionally young and female, settled in urban centers where the pattern of racial segregation combined with class and gender restrictions to limit the jobs available to female migrants.[11]

In overwhelming numbers the female migrants became household workers.[12] A statement by the reformer Lillian Pettengill shows how early in their lives African-American females were ascribed the role of servant. This statement also reinforces the fact that the most progressive White women accepted the restricted employment opportunities African-American women encountered.

> I am a servant girl, and I work in the kitchen of strange women for my daily bread. I did not slide into it as an inheritance from my foreign forebearers nor was I born to the life, like Topsy . . . .[13]

Several authors used statistics to document the massive influx of African American women to household empioyment in the urban areas outside the the rural south. Mary V. Dempsey in 1922 stressed that "the recent migration of negroes northward has led to the number of negro servants increasing 81 percent . . . ." George Stigler's work uses the census to examine "how the negro to white servant ratio had more more than tripled during the years 1900 to 1940."[14] Unfortunately, the authors do not explore in any manner the qualitative changes found within household service employment.

Another author, Daniel Sutherland, develops a work which describes and clarifies the forces shaping household work from the early part of the 19th century to the post World War I period. This work stresses the various reasons why different groups of persons entered household work and he explores the change in the character of this employment with the advent of each group. This author attributed the 20th century employment changes to alterations in American life, taxes, architectural simplicity, scientific housekeeping procedures, advanced municipal technology, efficient kitchens, mechanical innovations (gadgets), and the desires of middle class families for more privacy.[15] Nowhere did the author mention the active role of the household worker in determing under what conditions she would work.

For the 1890 to 1920 period one of the most complete studies was written by David Katzman. In his study of national trends, Katzman emphasized the social history, demography, and economic factors which led many southern females into household servant employment. Both qualitative and quantitative

data were used to describe the transition of household service work during the 1900 to 1920 period. The author states, however that "this is a general study with hypotheses to be tested at the local level."[16]

Local level studies give the scholar important insight into the reasons why individuals migrated to specific destinations. Many migrants came to Washington, D.C. because the city had become a burgeoning commercial center with a demand for unskilled labor.[17] The District of Columbia's history as the Union capitol during the Civil War also made it well-known and respected in rural areas of the South.[18] Nationally distributed African-American newspapers contained articles that reinforced the benign racial climate of Washington, D.C. One wrote, "Washington had become a town with very free negro and white mixing at social activities. The two also live in racially integrated areas."[19] Others came to a city where they hoped more personal freedoms would be guaranteed by the national government.[20] In the words of one migrant, interviewed by Ray S. Baker, "Me? I am leaving here going to Washington, D.C. and freedom! I want to be as near to the flag as I can!"[21]

To uncover information on how Washington, D. C. coped with these new residents,[22] it is necessary to investigate the records of the the District of Columbia's social, community or educational organizations.[23] The majority of the material written about the new migrants clearly reflects middle class biases against persons from the lower class. Migrants were criticised for "appearing at work in soiled clothing, run over heels,

tattered stockings with hair uncombed--to arouse sympathy they insist . . . ."[24] Other writings noted that the "new arrivals come uneducated. In many ways they are hastening the demise of our communities."[25] Newspapers also added to the negative perception of migrants. One Washington paper hoped that "new arrivals (from the south) would learn to work...and those who had jobs would keep quiet on the street cars on their days off"; another stated one of its main purposes was "to elevate the migrant class of workers."[26]

These women did not have to learn to work. The forebears of this "migrant class" of women understood well the centrality of work to their lives. As slaves, African-American females had been forced to labor in a variety of jobs; after slavery, racial discrimination (and the low wages paid to African-American males) guaranteed the continued exploitation of this group of women.[27] Barred from office and factory employment, except the most menial factory jobs,[28] African-American women would be confined to household servant work. In the United States "the absence of choice or preference was the main feature in the formation of the black servant class."[29]

These twenty three women, all members of "the Black servant class", were never "elevated"; they never abandoned employment in Washington, D.C. private households. However, the transition from kin-directed live-in servant to self employed household worker was a significant step; bringing release for them from one of the lowest and most exploited occupations in this country. The move to self employed household worker: furthered the efforts of the women as they worked to upgrade their marginal status within the African-American community; and, it afforded them a sense of dignity previously viewed as unattainable.[30]

In order to understand Dolethia Otis's phrase, "This work had a end," it is necessary to examine the context from which these women emerged, and the manner in which the shift from "servant" to "employee" was made. Using an interdisciplinary cultural approach, I have attempted to explore important dimensions of their occupations, learning directly from them their attitudes concerning the sociology of work. The conditions under which they were reared, and the system of meanings, values, and aspirations they developed prior to their employment as household workers, provides a background against which their lives can be more fully appreciated and understood.[31]

BACKGROUND

"No girl I know wasn't trained for work out by ten," Naomi Yates told me. "You washed, watched, and whipped somebody the day you stopped crawling. From the time a girl can stand, she's being made to work."[32] This brief statement by the eighty-seven year old migrant worker from North Carolina reveals much about the early lives of African-American women born in the rural southeastern United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Fourteen of the twenty-three women interviewed grew up on farmland owned by their parents; nine lived on share-tenant farms.[33] Nearly all were reared in extended family households consisting of mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings and other relatives. They were all born between 1884 and 1906. Importantly, each household included at least one former slave.

Each woman in the study vividly recalled hearing descriptions of the degrading condition of slavery communicated by the family member or members who had first-hand knowledge of that system. Further, the women were able to cite beliefs held by those former slaves regarding patterns and practices which enabled slave families to survive under the harshest of circumstances.[34]

Minnie Barnes at eighty-six, three years Dolethia Otis's senior, grew up in South Carolina. Frail of body, but with a voice still strong, she spoke of her "old aunt" passing on the stories of her days in slavery "like the milk, she gave us them stories every day!"[35] Because her mother "lived-out" working in a White household six days each week, Minnie Barnes' elderly aunt took over much of the day-to-day rearing of the children. "She'd tell you everything about slavery," I was informed. "Them people suffered and they never let you forget...They had help from God, their family and the other slaves. That's all; but they pulled together. They survived with only God and they people."[36]

According to these women the church continued to be the most important influence next to the family for African-Americans in the rural South; it played several roles in their early growth and development.[37] Important social, cultural and educational enrichment were experienced through association with churches. Ministers in the African-American communities where these women were reared were often the only educated members of those communities, and thus, a minister's function went far

beyond providing religious instruction.[38] Ninety year-old Marie Davies, in describing her three and one-half full years of education in Virginia (more schooling than any of the other women had), talked at length about a "Reverend Marshall." She remembered that he

> "would send you out to wash if he felt you hadn't done that good. Everybody, girl and boy, learned to cook a lot of something and how to slip a stitch. He told stories of how he worked to help his people and more to get a chance to go to normal school. Then, he'd make it seem like everybody could do better if they tried. He helped two people to go to Prentiss (in Mississippi)."[39]

In the classes which Reverend Marshall taught, Mrs. Davies also learned "to read, write, and some things about farming."[40]

The education of all of the women in the study was severely limited by the need to help support the family, which was recognized by them as their primary responsibility upon reaching seven years of age. They worked first on the family farm caring for the youngest children and serving as apprentices to the older females who performed other tasks.[41]

Bernice Reeder, a tall, light brown woman of eighty-six with long silver hair, clearly described her childhood in Virginia during the late 1890's. Her description of tasks assigned to small female children, and the ages at which they took on those responsibilities were as follows: "By four, you'd do field work; by six you'd be doing small pieces in a tub every washday and bring all the clear water for the rinsing of the clothes. By eight, you'd be able to mind children, do cooking, and wash.

By ten, you'd be trained. Really, every girl I know was working-out by ten. No play, 'cause they told you: 'life was to be hardest on you--always.'"[42]

Each of the twenty-three women recalled her mother leaving the home for residential (live-in) employment in White households in the surrounding area. Zelma Powell, who lived in Kentucky before coming to Washington in 1913, told how her mother would "leave on Sunday and be working at the Willis' till late Saturday."[43] Her cousin accompanied her mother "to mind they childrens."[44] She and her six siblings remained at home with their grandmother ("Big Mam"), until the grandmother died. After her grandmother's death, their mother had to rearrange her schedule in order to supervise them. In turn, Zelma Powell (at the age of seven) and her sister (who was ten) took over the care of five younger family members, enabling the mother to go out to work "all day Monday to Saturday and do wash and sewing (at home) nights."[45]

All of the women learned early in life that their contributions to the family welfare were critical to the survival of the family, and that independently employed children were an important part of household survival strategy.[46] "Like everybody, by nearly nine I went in to work with Mama," said Bernice Reeder in discussing the short period of outside tutelage work which preceeded a female child's first employment as live-in servant to a White family. She was alone on her first job, "at just nine years old! I was so scared," she continued. "Nobody cared you were a child . . . you was a worker to them . . . ."[47] The economic constraints faced by African-Americans in the rural South in the

late 1800's and early 1900's made such early labor an unavoidable and accepted part of family and community life.[48]

While very young, it was essential that females meet the three-part "training criteria" developed by African-Americans in rural areas of the South. Each female was required to proficiently complete childcare and housekeeping duties for the extended family with whom they resided. Every female was then to perform household duties, under adult kin supervision, in the homes of Whites residing in the surrounding communities. Finally, following this period of kin-directed tutelage, each female was to perform housekeeping tasks alone in the homes of local southern White employer. By the age of ten, these young females also had to clearly show they had the maturity to take the next step: travel to Washington, D.C. to provide relief to their northern kin. Sisters and aunts working as live-in servants in the urban North had to be supplied with support, in the form of childcare and housekeeping, by younger family members.

The women in this study made the journey North by train. For each it was their first experience of interstate travel. Twenty of the women were taken to the train station by a male relative. All left their place of birth in the early morning, traveled alone, and were met by kin members upon arrival in Washington, D. C.

LIVE-IN WORK

"Freedom!" exclaimed seventy-nine year old Velma Davis, sharing reminiscences of her first north-bound journey out of Virginia. "When you got on that train — you felt different. Seem like you'd been bound up, but now this train untied you. It's a funny way to feel." She added, smiling, that it was "like being untied and tickled at the same times!"[49] The migrant women understood that their first obligation was to carry on the rural-based family survival strategy in the homes of kin who served the white households of Washington, D.C. as live-in workers. The only significant change in their lives, initially, was the move North.[50]

Many studies which investigate the importance of the northern migration emphasize only the contribution southern women made to the child-care and financial stability of the northern household. Other studies suggest that the real benefits of migration went to the rural southern families in the form of money sent monthly by northern residing kin. These arguments tend to polarize the rural-urban relationship; neither acknowledges the dual/multiple roles played by kin both North and South. When rural families (lacking financial resources) permitted their young women to migrate out of the South to assist kin residing in the North, migration was seen as a continuation of the survival/support culture developed in the South. All segments of the African-American family operated under the assumption that older kin group members assisted younger one, with two very basic purposes in mind: to assure the survival

of (1) the youth of the family and (2) the family as a whole, North and South.[51]

The ways in which urban-residing kin gave support to their migrant rural kin were several, judging from information provided by the women interviewed. Urban kin paid all of the migrant's travel expenses to Washington, helped the migrant adjust to urban life and found employment for the new migrant within twelve months of arrival. In every case studied, all the women were hired where kin had contacts. And, in twenty-one cases out of twenty-three, the co-resident kin acquired employment for the migrant in households where they themselves were currently living.[52]

This study provides a corrective because it shows that urbanization, immigration, and migration did not render the personal-reference system ineffective, a belief in broad terms by scholars from the 1930's (Parsons) to the 1980's (Katzman).[53] For African-American migrants to Washington, D.C., the personal-reference system was very effective in bringing servants and employers together. Every woman in this study received her first urban employment because of the personal-reference given by a family member.

The women were all placed in households of powerful members of the White community of Washington. Their employers were people who, through money or political power or a combination of the two, exerted considerable influence in the federal city. I found that among the first employers of the interviewees, two were members of the Supreme Court, four were

United States Senators, and three were members of the House of Representatives. The others included a State Department official (and former diplomat), a high official at the War Department, four lawyers, three doctors, and five prominent businessmen. Even those men who did not hold positions within the federal government had close ties, both professional and social, with those who did. For example, one woman remembered her employer, a doctor, being called away from the dinner table when President Woodrow Wilson was taken ill.[54] The wives of these men played golf together, served on committees that oversaw the operation of various charities, and met for lunch.[55]

As live-in servants (in employment secured by kin) these female migrants learned that their primary role was to serve the mistress of the house, not just to complete the assigned tasks — a departure from the way they had worked in southern households. The relearning process was slow and painstaking. Through trial and error, and the advice of the more experienced migrants, they learned to act in response to the needs of the wife rather than the husband.[56]

The Washington "mistress," less a factor in Washington, D.C. than in the South, had a personality and the demands that set the tone of the household.[57] The seasoned live-in staff were aware of all of her idiosyncrasies, and this essential knowledge was transmitted to new servants prior to their employment. "But," reflected seventy-three year

old Virginia Lacy who'd come from South Carolina, "it's not till you're in her house that you really learn how she is and what it's like to work for her round the clock." [58] A fellow South Carolinian footman in the household where Minnie Barnes had arrived to work, cautioned her to, "Forget what you are to do and just keep her happy . . . she and them kids is your worry all the time. This ain't like home."[59] It quickly became very clear to new live-in servants that in order to make a smooth adjustment and receive information concerning the family's preferences, dislikes and goods, it was incumbent upon them to defer to those servants who were in a position to convey such facts.

While in the South, the man of the house directly supervised the servants' work, and had access to a servant's personal living space.[60] In Washington, by contrast, the male head of the home was viewed by the women as an "absentee manager." Referring to her male employer, Virginia Lacey stated that he was "never home." She added, "He'd leave everything to her mainly ... and not say much. Not like at home at all. Down home, they order you and her around. But not up here. They's just there."[61]

Importantly, the fear of rape by White male household members was less a factor in Washington, D.C. than in the South. Ona Fisher age seventy-seven, reported that back in North Carolina, mother, aunts, and many others warned young female kin about the threat of rape. "Nobody," she said, "was sent out before you was told to be careful of the White man or his sons."[62] Girls were counseled "how to run or not always be in the house alone with the White man or big sons."[63] But, "Up here?

He wasn't never home. Girls didn't never fear him like they did down home."[64]

Recent migrants diligently sought to be considered "good servants." Such employees were rewarded with extra money in time, paid holidays and less difficult work assignments. Eighty-four year old Mayme Gibson, a migrant from Mississippi who achieved the distinction of "good servant", said that such employees are "always moving. They never are sitting when anybody White is around. They'd just be doing nothing, but they made it seem so much to the Whites..."[65] Bernice Reeder, who was also endowed with that title ("good servant") compared it to what she had experienced in the South: "Down home you...was to do your job and mainly that's all . . . so after, you'd be let to rest like they other animals...but up here you got no peace . . . day or night, no peace from them people."[66]

Each of the twenty-three women was dismayed to learn that uniforms were mandatory in the District of Columbia. The wearing of uniforms was Perceived by all as <u>the</u> major difference between their servant <u>work</u> in the South and their servant <u>role</u> in Washington. For these women, the use of the uniform objectified[67] the live-in servant, determined her fate in the workplace, and reinforced the belief that the staff was only an audience working in appreciation of the wife's power displays. The home was the White mistress' stage and major realm of influence, and the uniform legitimized her power. Ophilia Simpson felt, "them uniforms just seemed to make them know you was theirs. Some say you wore them to show different jobs you was doing. This in grey, other serving in black. But

mostly them things just showed you was always at they beck and call. Really that's all them things means!"[68]

Tasks and staff directions were perceived by the migrant woman as measures utilized by the White woman to express her power, which was exercised especially on migrants (versus northern-born servants). When Velma Davis lived-in with a Chevy Chase family, she experienced treatment which differed from that of servants not born in the South. "She knew you was from down home, working to help them survive, so, that woman just plain ran us to death! People from up here could leave, so she'd be more careful with all them 'cause they'd quit on her."[69]

GETTING SET

In spite of any benefits received, such as those of a "good servant," within seven years these women were actively trying to leave the "servant life." It was the question of church participation that first stimulated more than half of those interviewed to seek a change. Not being able to attend regular church services on Sundays and generally feeling left out of the continuing life of their churches, became for these women a potent symbol of the restrictions of the live-in servant life.

"Even working-out down home, you'd go to church," Castella Harris explained, bedridden at eighty-six after a lifetime of household employment in Georgetown. "Everybody did," she continued slowly. "Now, most came just to hear the word. But some came to keep from being in

a kitchen somewhere . . . Church gave you six, not seven days of work. But up here you never saw church on Sunday, living-in."[70]

Despite the fact that each woman (and her family in the rural South) desperately needed the income her labor generated, the workers were unwilling to suppress their needs for those of their employers if any other employment could be acquired. The women all disliked the uniform (which formalized the serving of the family for long hours, which they could not control); the environment, where the wife (as authority) demonstrated no respect for their needs: and, the combined home/work situation, where they were forced to live in small quarters completely isolated from the African-American community.[71]

Painful as these restrictions were, by themselves they were probably not sufficient to lead the women to reject live-in servant work. The ability to change emanated from a phenomenon known as "penny savers" clubs. Twenty-one of the twenty-three women actively associated themselves with these philanthropic organizations. The clubs were mutual benefit associations which sponsored social gatherings and provided sick or death benefits to members. The organizations were city-wide, but active membership was restricted to persons from specific states (or regions of a state) in the South. Although rarely mentioned in the literature,

the penny savers clubs served as a vital economic base for the female migrant.[72] These clubs were begun by poor, migrant working women who barely sustained themselves economically. After an average of six years of saving, the women were able to develop the important economic leverage required to leave servant life.

The role of the church and of the penny savers clubs in first awakening the desire for change and, then, in facilitating the process of that change, cannot be overestimated. The clubs also permitted the women, during the transition from live-in servant to household worker, to consistently maintain financial security for themselves and their kin in the rural South. No woman left live-in work until she had saved enough money to maintain herself and send money monthly to rural kin. The concern all these women had about the continuity of support to southern families equalled or exceeded the concern they had for their own circumstances. They sought to take advantage of a less circumscribed economic and employment environment without abandoning one of the original motivations for leaving their rural families--relief of the family's economic distress.

The women also identified laundresses as critical in their search for autonomy. Laundresses served as role models who validated the migrant servant's self image, and, unlike the other staff members did not belittle the migrant woman's desire to gain household work on a non-

residential basis. Laundresses alone knew the categories and rules related to operating within several households simultaneously. The laundress also informed the women of households seeking the services of females, on a live-out basis, for one or two days per week.[73]

All but two women in the study acted upon the direction of the laundress when they located and acquired their first jobs as household workers. In the case of the women who did not acquire their first employment through the laundress' "tip," both still felt that the laundress was the only staff member supportive of their goals of escaping live-in work.

The rural southern and urban northern experiences of these African-American females reinforced the reality that neither age, marriage nor childbearing would provide them any respite from wage earning. In addition, the cultural matrix of the United States during this period dictated that African-American women would comprise a permanent "service caste." [74] Unlike White women, African-American women could not acquire employment in the clerical, manufacturing, mechanical, or home/shop industries; however, the shift away from live-in servant work at least permitted them to develop clear boundaries between their work world and their personal lives, and more control over the reality of their work situation.

SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND AUTONOMY

Eula Montgomery came to Washington, D.C. from Alabama. Eighty years old, her memory regarding her move into household work was not dimmed by time. "You'd be by yourself, working for the day and a day of pay. You was doin' a job, work. No serving running back and forth to hand them this and that. In daywork you got a job to do; you do it, and that's it. No running around doing a lot of nothing."[75] Her comment reflects the reorientation required when going from being one member of a household staff to working alone. The women saw the change as a step toward autonomy and independence, and away from the dependency and indignity of live-in work. It was the difference between a "job", or "work", and "serving".

"When you was working-in" added Ophelia Simpson, still bright-eyed at ninety-one, "they'd never let you forget you was just part of they staff . . . You never felt like you had one job for just you...Now, time I got my first days of work, it was different . . . They told me what to do to my face and I'd get to talk back to her."[76]

Bernice Reeder stated vehemently, "Switching to daywork meant I was on my own for the first time! Down home, Mama put you on them jobs. Up here, your people took you to work with them." She said that as a "day-worker my work time goes faster . . . I been working over seventy-five years and after I left live-in I never went back . . . It was you and too many other people doing a lot of nothing, making no money, having no say to nobody."[77]

Employee-Employer Relationships: A Power Shift

All of the women indicated that turning to household work produced a subtle change in their relationships to the White women for whom they worked. The household worker was now able to dictate her own pace, set her own priorities for tasks and direct, by herself, the process by which she completed designated chores. Virginia Lacey described the new experience this way: "She'd meet you at the door...tell you that and how she wanted her house done — and she'd be gone. You did the work without her . . . in the way slowing you up. On a day job we all knew how to get everything done — but, in your own way. Having anybody around will make you work slower."[78]

The women all agreed that trying to work efficiently was impossible when frequently being interrupted and spoken to by an employer. They felt that they knew how to perform their work well ("No girl I know wasn't trained for work-out by ten") and that they did not need to be monitored. "When I got work by the days, I'd work my way," explained Velma Davis. "Nobody'd be looking over your shoulder, saying what you was to do. What was the need leaving Sister and everybody if I was only going to work back with somebody else watching me? People took to daywork to finally get to work by theyself . . . . "[79] She said she wanted

nothing more to do with live-in work once she left Bradley Boulevard, where she had been a servant.

The Shedding of the Uniform

As the women moved out of live-in work, they shed their uniforms and other symbols of their identities as live-in servants. While living-in, each felt locked into a narrow and constricted role by the wearing of uniforms of "black for this" and "gray for that." Discarding the badge of their station in life clearly disafilliated them from their previous work.[80] Octavia Crockett, though very ill and weak, was eager to tell how, "When I got my first day job, I told them right off that I wasn't wearing a uniform. Them things are what really makes you a live-in . . . I had my own work dresses and all. They is just as nice."[81]

Virginia Lacey expressed what being free of uniform wearing meant to her: "I'd go to whatever house I'd have to be to work at. I change to my work clothes and then clean the house . . . I never liked to be in the uniform...I guess serving in a uniform made you be back on staff. And you wasn't, so you'd just not want to wear that uniform." she paused for a moment, reflecting, "Wearing your own clothes — that's like you being your own boss! You was on your own job for a

day and pay, then go home."[82]

There has teen a tendency for some scholars and artists sensitive to the plight of household workers to view the bags these women carried their clothes in negatively. But the women took pride in the fact that they "carried work clothes" to their jobs. The household workers felt that the bags were symbols of personal freedom and in that sense were positive. In fact, Marie Davies reported that workers often called them "freedom bags" She observed, "When I got to carry clothes I was finally working in what I wanted to. No black or grey uniforms or castoffs from the Whites down home. I was proud to put my stuff in a bag at home. I guess I wanted to finally show I didn't wear a uniform, I wasn't a servant."[83]

As servants, once the women had put on the uniform they took on the identity of the job — and the uniform seemed to assume a life of its own, separate from the person wearing it, beyond her control. It was as though the uniform and the role it signified were determined by "divine will," carrying a meaning far beyond its use as a garment in which to accomplish certain tasks. The woman was identified, evaluated and "stamped" by her uniform. The uniform was who she was; she ceased to exist as a unique individual each time it covered her body. This process by which an inanimate object takes on a life of its own is termed reification. The process of dereificatcn[84] began as the institution of live-in servitude collapsed, bringing about a sense of release and a broadening of horizons. The migrant women became aware that change (some change) was possible.

They began to see life as a series of personal choices, not as pre-determined imperatives. "Living-in, you had no choices about nothing. But working out you'd te able to pick homes, days and kinds of work you didn't do. You'd have some say in it," Bernice Reeder pointed out. "That's better."[85]

These previously segregated African-American women began to make contact with each other amid their newly flexible working conditions, encountering many others like themselves. The structure which had created social marginality among African-Americans in Washington, D.C. was slowly being dismantled. Along with the uniform, isolated and restrictive living circumstances were relegated to an oppressive past.[86] Bernice Reeder said that during her twelve years as a live-in servant she had believed that, eventually, she would have an opportunity for a better life. "Every time I put on uniforms," she stated, "I knew in myself it wouldn't be for long. And it wasn't just me. All us came here to do better!"[87]

The language the women used is an important example of the impending cultural change brought about by the movement away from live-in servant employment. They consistently used the terms "you" or "my" or "they" to express distinctions between themselves and any White employer. By the third interview, terminology application was clear. References to their lives prior to acquiring household work were made in very de-personalized language, characterized by the frequent use of

"you." They seemed to have virtually absented themselves from their stories. The "you" connoted a generalization, describing any young migrant from the South who had come North to be a live-in servant. Here, for example, are some of Virginia Lacey's comments (emphasis added): "You was brought up here and you'd soon to worked to death." Or, "You was put down on that floor . . ." and "they didn't ever offer you no mop...You wasn't like a person, to get respect or nothing...I couldn't start to tell what was done to you. And you better never even blink ...[88] In describing their migration or live-in servitude, they also represented themselves as being moved around like cargo, still referring to their former selves as "you": "You was put on the train," Octavia Crockett said, " and "You wasn't in that house for one hour before you was put right down to scrub," stated Amy Kelly.[89]

The distance conveyed via the medium of language may have been affected by the time perceptions used by African-Americans[90] and the fact that an average of fifty-nine years had passed since the women had worked as live-in servants. However, it also reflects a detached perception of self in relationship to those for whom they worked and to live-in work itself. Her voice heavy with emotion, Dolethia Otis ("This work had a end") recalled, "You came here and they'd work you like a dog. They houses was big (not like now) so they'd have a full staff — to serve day and night. Big people with big money; and, they have everybody working from dawn to after then...They jobs was just too much. And for only five dollars a month!"[91]

In many instances the independent worker proudly stated to an employer, as did Orra Fisher, "Your job is over too late"[92] or, in the case of Matilene Anderson (ninety-nine years old at the time of the interview), "I can't do your job Saturdays."[93] The "you" (or "your") indicated a refusal to own the job — to permit the tasks of any one household to become the individual's full-time preoccupation. The women wanted detachment from their employers and a buffer against the employers' insensitivity to them as workers and as African-Americans.[94]

Velma Davis attempted to clarify for me the significance of "my" and "they" during one of our talks: "When I say 'my job' I mean a job I got and I'd keep if they acted decent. Now, that is always by the day. Nobody trying to work me to death. 'They job' is for them; a job that you did and did, more and more and more — from just one thing to another, from early to late, and just being worked to death. It's hard to let you know what I mean."[95]

During this period, 1890 to 1926, employers usually hired someone other than their former live-in servants to work as daily paid household employees. The women acknowledged this policy; thus, in communicating their new plans to their employers, it was understood that future employment in that household would not be considered. "People who had a full staff only wanted full-time live-in workers," contributed eight-one year old Helen Venable, whose roots were in Alabama. "When you said you wanted to work days — you left there. She told you, you'd not be able to come back. It was okay, 'cause you'd got all set..."[96]

There were occasional exceptions. Two of the twenty-three women did do household work in homes where they had worked as live-in servants. Their testimony reflects their ability to radically reinterpret the[97] meaning of past events in terms of their new experience. Beulah Nelson became very agitated when recalling her changed perceptions of the household where she had been a servant. "They called me to work days after her children got in school for all day," she said. "I saw Aunt Lil still there with them as a live-in! She used to seem so busy and so nice. But, after I went back she just seemed silly...and not really doing a thing. When we was all working-in, it seemed like she was doing something. After I went back, it just seemed like kids' junk she was doing. Not me! I did my work . . . They needed me by the day only. To work."[98] The other woman who returned to her former live-in household was Bernice Reeder, and she found her perceptions greatly altered also: "Funny, they kids and all was not so cute...I guess you was just meaning business and work — not there to play with them, or to fill up the day with them like you do when living-in...The family seemed in the way more to me when I went back there. I guess I just saw them kinda different."[99]

When these women returned to their former live-in situations as household workers, the dynamics of their relations with the staff changed as well. They felt they had less time to "waste" and were no longer comfortable interacting extensively with employees who were not specifically concerned with completing their tasks. It was the very

issue of assignment and completion of designated work that influenced household workers to view live-in servants in a negative light. Their feeling of superiority, based on the fact that live-in workers had no clearly defined roles, was summed up by Beulah Nelson when she laughingly declared that, "They'd tell her to do anything! She wasn't doing a job; she's just serving, lapping up to they . . . I didn't like that no more . . . I was doing better than that!"[100]

The Loosening of the Kin Network

As in the realm of work, life in the women's personal sphere began to undergo change. Although most of them continued to live with their families, the shift to household service work altered their feelings about kin. With the change in work patterns, they saw less of their relatives and there was less interaction, particularly among the adults. Those family members still working as live-in servants returned to the home only one day each week—their "day off." Not only was there very little opportunity for exchange, but because of their new jobs as household workers, the women were losing interest in the conversational topics central to live-in servants.[101] Although Velma Davis remained in her aunt's apartment for a number of years after leaving live-in servant employment, she reported that it was only one day of each week she actually saw her kin. And, it was always very late in the evening. "Plus," she added, "I didn't care about what went on at the Kelly's no more!

So we didn't have much to say. If one of the kids was sick at night, I'd help. Other than that, we had no need to talk. Our work was different, so we was too . . . ."[102]

As the women changed jobs, they moved to rooms in boarding houses, and the nomic structure preceding this change began to crumble.[103] A sharply different lifestyle began to take shape. Velma Davis told how the other girls in the house where she became a boarder, "was all doing day-work, too," and that, "soon I was doing just about everything with them; I just liked being with these girls who was single, nice . . . ." After the move from live-in servant work, Velma Davis said that she didn't see her family for long periods of time.[104] She said that it was when she moved to the boardinghouse that she really began to feel she had finally left home. In 1919 Beulah Nelson took a room in a house where there were other boarders like herself. She said, "I lived there for three years and I didn't see my brother much at all." She described the parties she and the other female boarders were allowed to host and told me, "Them was my best days and that's how I met husband!"[105]

Having left the kin-directed live-in world, co-boarders and other commuting household workers became the guides, role models and mediators for the women in their changed environment. It was upon this new group that they built and maintained emotional dependency. Amy Kelly said she received much valuable advice and support from other roomers. "And if I ever got done wrong or anything — they'd tell me what to say to the woman...them girls was good to me." It was only after being around other young women with "days" that she was sure that her "live-in days was done."[106]

And so a new identity was gained. Gone was the identity with which they were born or which had been ascribed to them; this new one they had "achieved" on their own. Their newly-acquired friends and associates validated this "achieved status."[107] Bernice Reeder explained that "Once you got some work by the day and got around people who only did it, you'd see how you could get ahead, get better things. You'd see how to get more and more days, some party work, extra sewing, stuff like that."[108] Velma Davis agreed: "When I started working days, other people'd (household workers) show you how to get a few extra dollars. In this town you could make more money, and they'd sure show you how."[109]

Community Changes

Major changes took place in the African-American community as a result of the exodus of so many women from live-in servant work to household service employment. For one, interest in the penny savers clubs began to wane. Most studies trace the weakening of the mutual benefit associations to the widespread unemployment of the depression. For example, Jessie Blayton stressed that the economic recession of 1926 to 1929 taxed all African-American savings associations' resources by creating a greater demand for benefits at the same time that its members found it harder to keep up with their dues. Gunnar Myrdal suggests that alternate forms of life insurance provided the benefits previously gained only through mutual benefit associations. This is partly true, but there are other factors as well. Although the associations continued to exist

after 1929, household workers perceived them as institutions serving the needs of live-in servants. The women transferred to banks, in part, because their new jobs afforded them the opportunity to do so.[110] As Eula Montgomery remarked, "I'd have used them (banks) earlier, but with that woman you never got no time to go to a place like that. I know I didn't."[111] And Minnie Barnes verified this point: "I used a bank as a day-worker because it was on my streetcar line home."[112]

Most of the women, explained Helen Venable, felt that "them clubs wasn't for workers; it wasn't for . . . people getting their money on payday or getting paid every week."[113] The women stated that the reason for leaving penny savers clubs had to do with their desire to deal with established savings institutions, as other salaried employees did. The savings clubs, like uniforms, were viewed as symbols reflecting and reifying the servant role. Marie Davies said that the "banks was better than clubs. They was for servants; banks was for people with jobs."[114] The women wanted to be affiliated with African-American organizations which drew on a varied occupational constituency, and using a bank was a public acknowledgement of their new status as independent workers.[115]

The waning of the mutual benefit associations did not, however, mean the decline of support for rural kin. On the contrary, economic assistance typically increased after the transition to household work. Velma Davis, in speaking of the support she provided to her people in the South, said "I didn't miss a month ... That's why I got myself set before I left live-in. I never missed sending my share home."[116] And the amount she sent when she became a household worker, she stated, was "more." The pre-migration belief instilled in them regarding the

obligation of urban kin to rural kin was adhered to even more strongly. However, the early formed belief that the reciprocal support/obligation system operating inside kin networks should be carried on through community economic associations, [i.e., the penny savers clubs], no longer had meaning.[117]

The level of these women's participation in the African-American churches of Washington changed significantly. Previously, live-in servant work had greatly restricted their attendance and further involvement. Velma Davis recalled that, "Living-in? You never dreamed of going to day service. Sundays, you'd be out of there (the live-in household), if you was good, by four or five."[119] Regular participation in day church services was, also, an indication of status. "Big people, like government messengers, or people working in a colored business office, that's who'd be regular at Sunday day services," Eula Montgomery said. Individuals who worked in those types of jobs, she related, had their Sundays free; they could also, therefore, "be on the church's special committees . . . ."[120]

Live-in service had limited all aspects of church-related interactions with other church members.[121] Eula Montgomery went on to say that if "you lived in a room in the attic, how could you be in any of them clubs? You couldn't bring nobody over there." And ". . . you never got to be in a fellowship. That was for people who got off on Saturday and Sunday. They had a nice place to have people over to — not no kitchen." She also explained the contrast between the professed religious beliefs of employers and their practices, in relationship to live-in servants: "Now, they'd get up and go out to Sunday morning church

. . . He'd act like Sunday was such a holy day around there, He made it clear Sundays was a day of rest. But us? We'd work like dogs just the same. We didn't get no rest on that day."[122]

The "day of rest" philosophy obviously did not apply to live-in servants and, thus, it simply underscored in their minds a certain contradiction: adherence to religious principles on the part of employers did not extend to those who served them in their households. This lack of consideration regarding servants' religious needs and rights was widespread, existing in the homes of employers of all the various faiths. "Jews," said Virginia Lacey, "would have them big dinners and tell they childrens all about getting saved from slavery and death. But they'd not a bit more care...if you got to see the inside of any church."[123]

Regular church attendance, achieved through less confining employment, was accompanied by more leisure-time activities. For a man and woman who were married, "If they had kids they could all go to day church services. And in summer, out for picnics," Dolethia Otis pointed out.[124] And so regular attendance in church was viewed, not surprisingly, as representative of the attainment of "better" work. According to Nellie Willoughby, a migrant from Virginia, "It showed you had work you didn't live at."[125]

Participation in church and leisure activities did not mean that they did "easier" work.[126] The point was, that the work they did — even if more strenuous — permitted some previously unavailable "free" time. Bernice Reeder cited the laundress as an example: "She'd have four washes to do. Then she'd have them heavy irons for ironing them. She worked.

But, she'd still be able to get to church. She was on so many boards . . . She worked real hard for six days, but every Sunday she was off. Then, too, she had evenings to herself."[127] The washing and ironing constituted back-breaking labor; all of the live-in servants recognized this fact. But because it was live-out work, it offered a number of advantages over live-in servitude. The most often stated advantage was that it allowed the worker to develop new social roles.[128]

All of the women stated that household work was directly responsible for enabling them to participate more directly in the churches. The result of this change was a wider constituency of church membership. Before this came about, working class women were not well represented in the African-American churches.[129] "Most women down at Mason Street Baptist who were real active," contributed Helen Venable, "were educationed good and had jobs like teaching. As people got more away from live-in you saw a lotta different people in all the things that church has. Then more and more people got in the church's clubs or work."[130]

Matilene Anderson described the problems she experienced at the first church "meeting" she attended:

> "I had been working days for about two months and I'd promised I was going to join the B Club...Well, Pastor said the meeting was to be on Thursday night. I got to the door and had to drag myself in. I was just scared of...people who was teachers or clerks or in other jobs; all I know was people living-in, mostly. I got in and just acted

> like them. Soon other people got in and then we got busy...Now Third Street got all kinda people in everything. But, it wasn't like that always."[131]

The growth of African-American churches in Washington, D.C. was a direct consequence of the steady influx of these working class (former live-in) women.[132] They strongly supported church expansion because their participation in the church and church organizations further separated them from the stigma of servitude. Additional information regarding the changes which their increased participation in church brought about, was provided by Nellie Willoughby:

> "It was only on Sunday and Thursday night my church was open, till most people had work that let them be off evenings. I know it was round the time I left Miss Willis to work days that most of the organizations got going. That was during the war (World War I). Till then, nobody could be in a tithing club or a mission program. After people got more day-only work — that's when all these clubs, circles, and aide groups got going. Now church is open every night for them meetings!"[133]

It was the movement of the live-in servants into independent self-employment as household workers which caused the decline of the penny savers clubs and the swelling of African-American church congregations in the District of Columbia.

THE YEARS SINCE

This study has focused on the years 1900 to 1926, the period in which the twenty-three African-American women migrated from the South, settled in Washington, and made the transition from live-in servant to household workers -- prior to the Depression. However, the interviews upon which the study is based, took place more than fifty years later. What have those years held for the women?

The years from 1930 to 1937 were extremely difficult because of low wages (not one woman recalled earning more than ten dollars a month during that period), bleak living conditions, and extensive suffering.[134] However, in spite of the harsh circumstances, none of the women returned to live-in employment. Miss Willoughby remarked that even though she had barely enough to eat, "I just made it some way, doing some of everything."[135] No matter how deprived her situation became, she would not turn back to servant work. Velma Davis, remembering how her mother was gone from home "day and night," vowed that she herself "wasn't going back to living that-a-way" -- which would force her to be away from her child for long periods of time. She added, "Sure, it was hard, but God got me and Levi through that too."[136]

During World War II, wages increased for the women, as they did for most workers.[137] By 1960, due to aging, half of them began cutting back on the number of days worked per week. Six women had incomes to supplement the household; four had the retirement or death benefits of husbands; two lived with their children, thus eliminating all rent and food expenses.

By 1970, only six of the women still worked five days a week. At the time of the study, only three women were employed, two of them three days a week. Nellie Willoughby proved to be an exception: at eighty-six she was reporting four days a week to a family she had served for fifty-six years. Significantly, not one of the twenty-three women ever transferred from household work to another occupation.

From 1926 to 1938, the number of days a week they worked for any one family varied among the women, as did the number of years they stayed in any one job. Two women worked for one family twice a week for twenty-five years; only one worked for the same family for over fifty years.[138]

As noted earlier, household service work allowed them to become very involved in church activities. They became missionaries, deaconesses, ushers, and Sunday School teachers. One became a Sunday School superintendent; nineteen sang in at least one church choir. All participated in fundraising activities. The women were active in community affairs, as well. Eight became Girl and Boy Scout leaders. Seven worked in civic or block improvement clubs. Four joined an international sisterhood (Eastern Star), and three worked with the Urban League or the National Association for the Advancementof Colored People in membership drives. One woman worked extensively with the YMCA.[139]

Integrated as they were in their adopted communities and churches, all of the women in this study maintained strong ties with family members in the rural South.[140] "Home" was how each referred to her place of birth. Three women (Minnie Barnes, Costella Harris and Octavia Crockett) returned

"down home" to deliver their first babies. Fourteen women left at least one of their children there for several years, to be reared by grandparents.

Nearly half of the women interviewed were still sending money to the "homeplace" or the "home-church" monthly. Summer reunions or fall homecomings were regularly attended by many. Naomi Yates, Dolethia Otis, and Octavia Crockett belonged to social organizations which sponsored bus trips for fall homecomings to specific "homechurches."

The migration chain did not end with these women: fourteen brought a relative up from the rural South to live with them in Washington. Two women assisted in the migration of three or more relatives. Each woman remembered helping other new arrivals from her place of origin to find jobs and places to live in the District of Columbia. Thus, the provision of housing and employment for new migrants continued to be an important mutual assistance rendered by kin who had settled in Washington.[141]

Six of the women inherited property in the rural South. Denna Carter, Orra Fisher and Beulah Nelson spoke of returning there to live, but health or kinship responsibilities had so far prevented desire from reaching fruition. Five of the women said that they plan to be buried "down home in the family plot."[142]

Each of the twenty-three became active in the rearing of at least one child, three of them adopting or helping to raise the children of relatives. Twenty became natural mothers. Fifteen married at least once; seven never married. They all indicated that their families became important emotional anchors.[143]

Family also became an index of success each woman used. Each woman took pride in stating that her own children did not every work as live-in servants.[144] Nine noted that their daughters had worked for a short period as dayworkers, eventually moving on to salaried jobs in small industry or government.

Orra Fisher's response best sums up what the women expressed when asked about their life's happiness or success.

> "I worked hard to serve God and to see that my three girls didn't have to serve nobody else like I did except God. I'm happiest about that, I guess.
>
> I'm satisfied to know I came a long way. From a kitchen down home to a kitchen up here, and then able to earn money, but live with my children and grands. Now, Jesus took me every step — that's real.
>
> But look at me, with more than I ever dreamed I'd have. And my three, with houses and jobs. My girls in an office, and the baby — my son — over twenty years in the Army.
>
> I get full thinking about it. I had it bad, but look at them."[145]

FOOTNOTES

[1]According to the National Committee of Household Employees 'dayworker' and 'domestic' are negative and undersirable terms. This group feels these terms have become disparaging epithets for women employed in private homes. See: The National Committee of Household Employees (NCHE), "What We Want: Issues,"; NCHE, "Business Opportunities in Household Work"; and NCHE, "Women's Educational Equity Action Project Reports" all located at the Bethune Museum and Archives for Black Women's History, Washington, D.C..

For the purposes of this paper, females employed on a daily basis primarily to clean private family homes will be referred to as household workers or independently employed household workers. However, no adjustments will be made to any terms within direct quotes.

[2]For general discussions of household workers see: Benjamin R. Andrews, "Household Employment," The Woman's Press 25 (July 1931); Jean Collier Brown, Concerns of Household Workers (New York: The Woman's Press, 1941); Soraya Moore Coley, "And Still I Rise," Ph.D. Dissertation, Bryn Marw College, 1981; Bonnie T. Dill, "Across The Boundaries of Race and Class," Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1979; Faye Dudden, Serving Women (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Allyson S. Grossman, "Women in Domestic Work: Yesterday and Today," Monthly Labor Review 103 (August 1980): 18; Verta Mae [Groversnor], Thursdays and Every Other Sunday Off (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1972); Elizabeth Ross Haynes, "Negroes in Domestic Service," Journal of Negro History 8 (October 1923):384-442; E. P. Hutchinson, Immigrants and Their Children (New York: Russell and Russell, 1976); David Katzman, Seven Days a Week (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Orra Langhorne, "Domestic Service in the South," Journal of Social Science 39 (Spring 1901):170-181; Mary V. Robinson, Domestic Workers (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1924); I. M. Rubinow, "The Problem of Domestic Service," Journal of Political Economy 14 (1906):502-519; Lucy Maynard Salmon, Domestic Service (New York: MacMillian and Co., 1897); Daniel Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); and Katherine D. Tillman, "Afro-American Women and Their Work," African Methodist Episcopal Church Review 11 (1895):477-499. For important archival resources see Debra L. Newman, Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1984), 179-181.

[3]Scholars estimate that the "Great Depression" had began in African-American communities by 1926. See John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); Abram L. Harris, The Black Worker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931); William H. Harris, The Harder We Run (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

This study will focus on the changes in household employment from 1900 to the 1926 period. Studies with emphasis prior to 1900: Dudden, 1983; Salmon, 1897; Sutherland, 1981. Post 1925 studies: Coley, 1981; Dill, 1979; Phyllis Palmer, "Household and Service Work: The Racial Division of Women's Work and Women Workers," paper delivered at the Sixth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, June 1984, Smith College, Northhampton, Massachuttes; Lois Helmbold, "The Impact of the Great Depression on Black and White Working Class Women's Lives and Relations," Sixth Berkshire Conference, June 1984; and Julia Kirk Blackwelder, Women of the Depression (College Station: Texas A and M University Press, 1984), 184.

[4]For household service work in the District of Columbia see: Grace Fox, "Women Domestic Workers in Washington, D. C., 1940," Monthly Labor Review 54 (February 1942):338-345; Lorenzo Greene and Myra Colson Callis, The Employment of Negroes in the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1937); National Committee on Household Employment, There Must Be A Code of Standards (Washington, D.C.: National Committee on Household Employment, 1974); Mary Waggoman, "Wartime Job Opportunities for Women Household Workers in Washington, D.C.," Monthly Labor Review 60 (March 1945):575-584; and Katheryn Willer, Women Domestic Workers in Washington, D.C. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940).

[5]For the complex reality of social groups see: Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1966). For individual definitions and reality shifts see: George Ritzer, Sociology (Boston: Allen and Bacon, 1980). For cultural pluralism and women see: Lynda Glennon, Women and Dualism (New York: Longman Press, 1979).

[6]Isabel Eaton, "Special Report on Negro Domestic Service," in The Philadelphia Negro by W. E. B. DuBois (New York: Blom, 1899), 136-137.

[7]Bettina Aptheker, Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex, and Class in American History (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 112; Ann Oakley, Woman's Work (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3-9.

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For community improvement records see: R. G. 176, Records of the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, Work of Organizations Files, includes detailed District of Columbia studies on "Domestic Relations in the Home" and "Servant Living Needs (Colored)." Also contains manuscript information from the National Association of Wage Earners. This organization was headed by Nannie H. Burroughs, Mary McLeod Bethune and Minnie L. Bradley.

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[85]*Bernice Reeder Interview. Compare with the findings of Katzman, 221.

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114*Marie Davis Interview.

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116*Velma Davis Interview.

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118Williams, 9-11; Henri, 114-115.

119*Velma Davis Interview.

120*Eula Montgomery Interview. Also see Williams, 33-47 for an excellent analysis of African-American church hierarchies.

121Williams, 34.

122*Eula Montgomery Interview.

123*Virginia Lacey Interview. See Katzman, 163-164 for servant versus mistress religious concerns.

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[138]Compare with Dill, "Across the Boundaries," Conclusion.

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[140]Larry Long, Back to the Countryside . . . . (New York: Perghmon Press, 1980). This segment of research was aided by discussions with Professor Carol Stack, Duke University.

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[142]Johnson and Campbell, Epilogue: United Nations, Rural-Urban Migration and Development Policy (New York: U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, 1983), 53; Carol Stack's "Urban to Rural Migration Study" (forthcoming).

[143]Dill, The Means To Put My Children Through, 122; Katzman, 176.

[144]"The Race Problem—An Autobiography: By a Southern Colored Woman," Independent 56 (March 1904): 578; DuBois, 21; Dill, The Means To Put My Children Through, 110-112.

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